

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A piston cylinder unit comprising:
  - a closed cylinder having an end wall;
  - a piston rod guided through said end wall;
  - a piston fixed to said piston rod for axial displacement in said cylinder, said piston dividing said cylinder into a working space surrounding the piston rod and a working space away from the piston rod;
  - an annular seal between said piston and said cylinder;
  - a volume equalizing space in said piston;
  - a first valve which can be opened under pressure to admit fluid from said working space away from said piston rod to said volume equalizing space,
  - a second valve which can be opened under pressure to admit fluid from said working space surrounding said piston rod to said volume equalizing space,
  - at least one of said first and second valves comprising:
    - a valve chamber ~~provided within said volume equalizing space~~ in said piston and having a mouth opening into a respective one of said working spaces,
    - a valve piston displaceably mounted within said valve chamber and biased towards said mouth by a closing force,
    - a closing element coupled to said valve piston and extending between said valve piston and said mouth, said closing element being configured to close said mouth and

displaceable with said valve piston from said mouth when pressure in said respective working space exceeds said closing force,

wherein said at least one of said first and second valves is configured as a non-return valve providing flow communication between said respective working space and said volume equalizing space upon opening said mouth;

a first non-return valve which can admit fluid from said volume equalizing space to said working space away from said piston rod; and

a second non-return valve which can admit fluid from said volume equalizing space to said working space surrounding said piston rod.

2. (currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 1, wherein said volume equalizing chamber has a fluid capacity which increases under pressure loading and decreases under pressure relief.

3. (currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 2, further comprising a volume-equalizing element in said volume-equalizing chamber, said element having a volume which decreases under pressure loading and increases under pressure relief.

4. (currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 3, wherein said volume equalizing element has an elastomeric wall enclosing a space filled with a gas.

5. (canceled)

6. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure comprises a helical compression spring ~~and~~ or a cup-type compression spring.

7. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure is a seat valve.

8. (currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure is a slide valve.

9. (canceled)

10. (currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 1, wherein ~~first and second~~ said closing force is produced by a spring.

11. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim ~~4~~ 10, wherein said spring comprises one or more spring arms supported on the piston and applying a force which is degressive so that said closing element is subject to less force in a closing direction as said closing element moves in an opening direction.

12. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 9 1, wherein one of said closing element and said valve piston of said at least one of said first and second valves is loaded in the closing direction by magnetic forces.

13. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 12, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure comprises a permanent magnet on one of said valve piston and said piston and a ferromagnetic component on the other of said valve piston and said piston.

14. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 9 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure is retained in an open position by a retaining force which is smaller than said closing force, said retaining force added to said pressure being larger than said closing force.

15. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 14, further comprising a latching element on one of said valve piston and said piston, and a latch on the other of said valve piston and said piston, said latching element and said latch providing said retaining force.

16. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 14, further comprising a snap spring arranged on the valve piston, said snap spring having a snap arm which is contact with said piston without any substantial axial force in the closed position, and cooperates with said piston to provide said retaining force in the open position.

17. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 9 1, further comprising at least one permanent magnet arranged on said valve piston and at least one permanent magnet arranged on said piston, said permanent magnets being arranged to provide said closing force when said valve piston is in a closed position and said retaining force when said valve piston is in an open position.

18. (currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 1, wherein said annular seal is designed to form said first and second non-return valves.

19. (currently amended) A The piston cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 18, wherein said annular seal comprises two axially spaced annular sealing lips which bear against said cylinder and form a space therebetween, said piston comprising a connecting line which connects said volume equalizing space to said space between said annular sealing lips.

20. (withdrawn, currently amended) A The piston-cylinder unit ~~as in~~ of claim 18, wherein said annular seal comprises two axially spaced valve flaps separated by a sealing ring which bears elastically against said cylinder, said piston comprising a ~~pair of~~ connecting ~~lines~~ line which opens radially on said piston and leads to the volume-equalizing chamber, said valve flaps closing ~~respective~~ said connecting ~~lines~~ line.